budget for Kerala but that is not ·pent there. They always look towards Madras and Tamil. ·lu. The officers looking after the gauge conversion or doubling work be they from Madras or Bangalore, do not pay attention to our problems. Nobody works for early implementation of the said assurances. We had demanded for westcoast Railway zone in Kerala. The hon. Minister should pay attention to it.

At present, a new Railway zone has been opened in almost every State but Kerala has been singled out. If the development activities of Kerala have to be run properly, one Railway zone should be opened in Kerala. I, through you, demand the hon. Minister of the Railways to consider our demands and fulfil the promise made to us...*(Interruptions)*

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister of Railways is prepared to speek; please give him a chance...*(Interruptions)*

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : I am not preventing anyone from speaking.

(Interruptions)

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : Please sit down...

(Interruptions)

SHRI RAMESH CHENNITHALA : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, he will speak only after you allow him to speak...*(Interruptions)*

[English]

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : Why do you not sit down? Sit down, please. Allow him to speak.

(Interruptions)

SHRI P.C. CHACKO (Mukundapuram) : He wants to speak...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI P.C. THOMAS (Muvattupuzha) : Sir, One Chief Engineer's Office in Ernakulam was sanctioned in 1991. But it has not been started yet. The proposal has not been implemented. It should be implemented ...*(Interruptions)*

[Translation]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : He has agreed with you...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, first of all I thank him for speaking so good Hindi. So far as the question of zone is concerned, the hon'ble member knows that nine zones were already there, six zones were set up after 33 years. Therefore, it is not possible to set up zone.

You have spoken about the office of the Chief Engineer. Yesterday, you have given it in writing also. We are looking into it. Secondly, supplementary budget of railways is going to be introduced soon. You have spoken about short-route and doubling of railway track, which is your general issue. We have already accepted that. So far as your charge of slow-work is concerned, I assure you that it will not be slow at any rate. In case of doubling of track, I would like to say that the Railways are also interested in this work as you are because it is a matter of profit for the Railways itself. Therefore, the question of neglecting the South or Kerala does not arise. The Railways budget is going to be introduced soon. In that budget we shall discuss all aspects in details and reply to each and every point.

[English]

SHRI N.K. PREMACHANDRAN (Quilon) : Respected Deputy-Speaker, Sir, I am thankful to you for having given me an opportunity to raise a matter of urgent public importance regarding the cashew workers in Kerala. Out of the total 4,26,000 workers covered under the ESI Scheme in Kerala, 1,25,000 belong to the cashew sector. The cashew industry is now facing a severe crisis due to multifarious reason. First, it is because of the lack fo raw cashewnuts and also the steadily increasing price of raw cashewnuts. Dur to this reason, the number of working days is declining from year to year. In order to meet the situation, in the year 1989, a Special Scheme has been enacted which is named as the ESI Cashew Workers Scheme. Under this Scheme, disregard of the attendance of the workers, the ESI benefit has been given to these workers. But it is quite surprising to note that the ESI Corporation in its meeting held on 5.10.1996 has arbitrarily decided to stop, to discontinue the ESI Special Scheme. About 35,000 to 40,000 cashew workers are benefited by this Scheme. The ESI Corporation has decided to discontinue the Scheme with effect from 30.10.1996.

So, I urge upon the Minister of Labour to reconsider this decision, review this decision and revive the Scheme at the earliest Also, I would like to submit and I would like to draw the attention of the Labour Minister to the fact that 95 per cent of the cashew workers are women. The women workers also belong to Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe communities. Considering the special circumstance and the nature of work which they are doing, they are subjected to so many diseases. Further, the number of working days is very less due to a number of reasons which are beyond the control of the workers. They were getting the benefit and also they are living below the povertyline. But they are now denied the right of the benefit of the ESI Scheme.

So, I urge upon the Government and the Minister of Labour to consider it as a special case. Disregard of the attendance in which they are working, they should be given the benefit of the ESI Scheme. Considering the fact that they are coming under the poverty line, about 35,000 to 40,000 workers were benefited by this Scheme. So, I once again urge upon the Minister of Labour to reconsider the decision taken on 5.10.96 to discontinue the scheme from 30.9.1996.